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T H E

# CHRISTIAN PRIVATE.

*James A. [unclear]*

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

"Blessed are the pure in heart ; for they shall see God."

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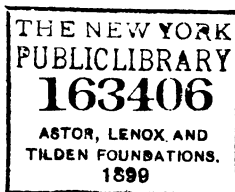
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# THE CHRISTIAN PRIVATE.



## CHAPTER I.

THE passing months and years of our nation's fearful struggle for the supremacy of right over wrong, of loyalty against treason; for the establishment and perpetuation of national and individual freedom in place of wicked, cruel, debasing systems of oppression and slavery, are bringing out, in bold relief, some of the noblest specimens of human character that ever adorned the pages of history.

Among the brave defenders of our country's righteous cause, are many high in

office, both military and civil, well fitted to direct and command, whose names will be handed down to future generations as champions of liberty, and as such, justly deserving the most affectionate and honorable remembrance and gratitude. Many of these noble men have already paid the price of their faithful devotion to the cause of truth by freely laying down their lives in its service.

But if we would look for the bone and sinew of the support on which our government rests, and by which it is to come off conqueror over all the combined forces of rebellion, we must turn to the "rank and file." It is here that we shall find patient, persistent, self-sacrificing patriotism; for here it is tried and proved as it can be nowhere else. We do not, of course, claim patriotic motives, for all our volunteers; for this would be most absurd. Nor do we say it with any shadow of a vindictive



spirit towards those of higher rank ; but we affirm it in simple justice to the humble but truly noble privates of our army.

There are thousands of this class who have left homes of comfort and even of luxury, with all the fond endearments of the loved circle, whose hearts were almost breaking, while they would not speak the word to keep them back, and have gone forth to meet the perils, privations, and severe hardships of the soldier's life, and all from love to their country and their God. They have given up lucrative and pleasant employments in exchange for thirteen dollars per month and "hard-tack."

And there, too, we shall find many an earnest, conscientious, faithful Christian, who carries with him to the camp and the battle-field the strong and supporting faith in God, which is to be his "shield and buckler" and his holy consolation at all times. It was this trust in God which

first led him to devote himself to his country's service ; and it is this same trust that is to be his unfailing refuge, and the high tower to which he may flee in every hour of peril, trial, and privation. The truly faithful soldier of the cross will ever prove the most reliable soldier in defence of his government. His influence for good on those about him can never be fully estimated until it is revealed in the light of eternity. The cheerful, consistent example of a Christian soldier will, with God's blessing, soften and subdue the heart of many a hardened sinner, and make them to believe as never before, that truly "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and *all* her paths are peace."

And just such a blessed service to his God and his country we believe to have been accomplished by the subject of the following pages ; "Though dead, he yet speaketh."

It is with the earnest wish, the cherished hope that his bright example may speak in gentle, encouraging whispers to other Christian hearts, and even prove the "still, small voice" which may bring some soul to Christ, that this simple sketch of this faithful soldier of the cross and of his country is prepared.

Spencer Phelps was born in Chesterfield, Mass., March 28, 1832. His father, Deacon Timothy Allen Phelps, was the grandson of Rev. Timothy Allen, first pastor of the church (Orthodox Congregational) in that town.

Mr. Allen was a man of strong mind, unbending determination, earnest, active piety, well-rooted and grounded in the faith and doctrinal belief of his fathers. In short, he was a minister of the gospel of Christ, with the blood of Puritan ancestors flowing in his veins, and Puritan principles ruling his life. And he bequeathed

to his posterity the same bold and fearless adherence to the truths of religion, as they learned them from the diligent searching of the Scriptures, to which they were daily accustomed from earliest childhood.

Deacon Phelps was a man of superior mental and civil ability, an intelligent reader, a profound thinker, and a close reasoner, with a good degree of independence, both in thought and action. Although devoted to rural occupations among the rugged hills of Western Hampshire, his talents and attainments were recognized and rewarded by various offices of trust and distinction, both in town and county, representing each at different times in the State Legislature. Added to all these, and above them all, was a firm, active, straightforward Christian character, founded upon and governed by an intelligent and heart-felt appreciation of divine truth.

He passed his threescore years and ten

in active usefulness, and was gathered to his fathers in peace and the rich, full consolations of a hope of life eternal, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Mrs. Phelps was also descended from a long line of pious ancestry, and possessed a bright intellect, sterling sense, with fervent religious principle living and growing in her soul, and bringing forth fruit in her life.

From both their parents their children were taught, both by precept and example, to admire and love the very essence of Christianity, in doctrine as well as practice.

We have glanced thus briefly at the antecedents of our friend, because we can trace their influence upon his own personal character.

Spencer was the youngest of six children, — four daughters and two sons. In his early boyhood, he was quite remarkable

for uniform propriety of conduct and amiability of disposition.

We confess to a strong aversion to representing children, either boys or girls, as models of excellence, seldom, if ever, exhibiting any of the follies of childhood ; for we are well aware that all such delineations of juvenile character are almost universally regarded as partial and untruthful. But in the present instance a strict adherence to truth will compel us to say that as a boy, Spencer Phelps exhibited a conscientiousness, a manliness of deportment, and a maturity of mind far beyond the ordinary standard. We fully believe that it would be the universal testimony of all who knew him that he was an exemplary child, seldom meriting reproof. At home, at school, or on the farm, he was always faithful and reliable. At six years of age, he could be safely trusted to drive a yoke of oxen, bearing a large load of hay, into

the barn, and the result proved that his trustworthiness was not over-estimated. This is not mere supposition, but a simple fact.

He was not, however, a dull boy. Although very quiet and gentle, he was very far from being stupid. He possessed a quiet mind, a clear judgment, and an uncommonly retentive memory. He was very fond of his books, and his leisure hours were devoted to reading, to a great extent, rather than to boyish sports; and in this way he acquired a large fund of useful knowledge and general information. His active, out-door life prevented a physical necessity for devoting much time to the useless plays of most boys, and the retired surroundings of his mountain home afforded less temptation to spend his evenings abroad than besets our village boys.

And he was master of what he read or studied, never satisfied with a superficial

knowledge of anything that he undertook. He formed his own opinions and drew his own conclusions, even when a mere lad. The New Testament was nearly his first reading-book, and he was very familiar with its pages before many children are thought old enough to read it for themselves intelligibly. In illustration of this, we will give a little incident, which we well remember hearing related soon after it occurred, when Spencer was eight years old.

Going to church with his parents one Sabbath, they were a little late, and the minister was reading the morning chapter when they entered the house.

Spencer very quietly took his seat, listened attentively for a minute, then opened his Testament, at once turned to the place, and followed the minister through the chapter. His mother afterwards asked



him how he knew where to find the chapter, and he replied, —

“I thought from the reading that it was the third chapter of Mark.”

Would not this little boy of eight years put to the blush many an older person,—ay, even many a Christian reader of the Bible, who may have made it a daily companion for years? It was not because there is anything in this third chapter of Mark to impress it, above all others, upon the mind of a child; it was simply because he read attentively and remembered accurately. And through life he was remarkable for this same accurate and ready familiarity with the Scriptures. He was seldom at fault, or found wanting, if asked to quote a certain passage, or tell where it was to be found.

## CHAPTER II.

AND thus quietly passed the boyhood of our friend among the rocks and hills of his native town.

His winters were spent in school, where he always made great proficiency, and maintained a high rank.

In the spring came the maple-sugar season, and it is a time eagerly welcomed by children generally, and was perhaps especially so by Spencer, and while he lived, he never lost his fondness for this product of the home farm.

The summers were employed in performing the various labors of the farm, suited to a boy of his age and capacity, — the latter always being in advance of the

former. By this we only mean that his judgment and faithfulness were beyond his years, so that he was capable of performing many duties that would never be expected of most boys.

One who knew him from a child said of him, "I do not remember the time when Spencer was a boy. He has always been a man." And it was not wide of the truth.

And all this time the home training, the heart culture, was going forward. The foundation for that noble character, beautiful in its simplicity and purity, was laid broad and deep. The seed of high-toned moral and religious principle had been carefully planted in the soul, and had taken root there, which would afterward, through the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, bud, blossom, and yield a rich harvest.

In the winter of 1849-50, Spencer at-

tended a select school in Hinsdale, Mass., under the direction of a noble young man, whose talents, combined with an all-pervading piety, gave glad promise of a bright future. Although called away in the early noontide of usefulness and honor, the name of Professor Lincoln, of Williams College, will long be held in most cherished and grateful remembrance.

Beneath the reserved and quiet exterior, Mr. Lincoln detected in young Phelps superior talents and traits of character, which he felt might prove a rich blessing to the world.

He was very anxious that these talents and principles should be developed, expanded, and cultivated by a thorough course of study, feeling assured that whatever gifts he now possessed, or might attain, would, ere long, be offered at the Saviour's feet in willing, life-long conse-

cration, and be used for the glory of God and the good of mankind.

He therefore urged him very strongly to pursue a collegiate course, probably not doubting that theological studies would follow, and that in due time the church of Christ would welcome him as an able, earnest, and devoted minister of the gospel.

Much as the pupil loved and respected the teacher, and confided in his judgment, while truly grateful for his good opinion, Spencer felt that this was not his true calling. There were obstacles in the way of his adopting such a course, and plans were formed and arrangements made for him to engage in other pursuits.

But as long as Professor Lincoln lived, he continued to cherish a most kindly and heartfelt interest in the welfare and success of his former pupil. Both have now entered upon the blest reward of their la-

bors, not for their own worthiness, only as they trusted in Jesus for salvation.

In the spring of 1850, Spencer Phelps left his loved and quiet home to serve an apprenticeship in the trade of carpenter and house-builder. He went to Northampton, Mass., which place was thenceforth his home.

For five years he was in the employ and resided in the family of Mr. K. A. Bunnell, whose name has been, for the last six or eight years, very familiar, both East and West, as an earnest, warm-hearted, untiring missionary of the Massachusetts Sabbath School Society, laboring in the West and Northwest; and more recently as the faithful servant of the Christian Commission, carrying the word of life, and whispering the consolations of Jesus to hundreds and thousands of our poor suffering dying soldiers, in camp and in hospital.

—a blessed commission, eternally glorious in its results !

The same upright, conscientious, exemplary conduct marked his life, in the new position which young Phelps now occupied. Ever faithful to his employer, he carefully followed every direction, in minute detail as well as in general design ; and this he would do both for his own sake and that of his employer. As we have before said, he aimed to be master of whatever he undertook. He was kind, courteous, and obliging to every one with whom he associated.

In the family he was wellnigh a model of patience, amiability, and unselfishness, —always ready to lend a helping hand whenever it was called, and kind and watchful as an elder brother with the children. He seemed to have most perfect control of his temper ; for with his independence of thought and firmness of prin-

ciple, he certainly possessed a commendable share of what may be termed spirit.

He was not, as a casual observer might possibly imagine him to be, of an indifferent or "milk-and-water" nature. He was so quiet and unobtrusive that his real character was very slowly learned and appreciated.

His feelings were strong and deep; his affections warm, true, and abiding, though his manner was not very demonstrative, save in the loving eye and earnest grasp of the hand.

The most tender and life-enduring friendship grew up between the employer and the employed, and we may hereafter have occasion to allude to the testimony which Mr. Burnell has given of the estimate in which he held this "son, brother, counsellor, and friend."

Although he was so consistent in all his deportment, so correct in all his prin-



ciples, and such an attentive, constant, and intelligent Bible student, both at home and in Sabbath-school, yet Spencer did not feel that he had truly accepted Christ as his personal Saviour, and consecrated himself to the service of his divine Master.

Both from early training, habit, and principle, he was always very careful in the observance of the Sabbath.

His reading on the Sabbath was of the most strictly religious character, in which secular newspapers shared no part. In speaking of him about this time, a member of Mr. Burnell's family remarked, —

“You do not often find a young man of Spencer's age who will sit and read Scott's Commentary, hours together; but it is no unusual thing for him to do it.”

Nor do we believe that he did it merely from a sense of duty; but he really delighted in the expositions of truth, and in gaining information which would throw

light on the history of men, as revealed in the Bible, and on the usages and customs of the age in which they lived.

And, as we have mentioned, what he read or heard was well remembered, so that in after-years he was better fitted to instruct and enlighten others in Scripture truths than most at his age, or, we might say, than most at any age. But with all these graces of heart and life, there was yet needed the renewing of the whole inner life.

### CHAPTER III.

It was early in the second year of his connection with Mr. Burnell that the Holy Spirit revealed to Spencer, in a special manner, his condition as a sinner, "dead in trespasses and sins." What he had before fully believed intellectually now entered deep into his very soul, forcing upon him the conviction that there is no salvation save by the redemption purchased by Christ.

"There is none other name given under heaven among men, whereby we can be saved;" and he had not really and truly sought and obtained forgiveness through that name.

We might very naturally expect that a

young man of his exemplary character and thorough knowledge of the truth would very easily and almost imperceptibly pass from a state of nature to that of regeneration by grace.

But such was not the experience of Spencer Phelps. There were days and weeks of great darkness of soul and bitter strivings of the natural heart before he found peace.

The Edwards Church, where Mr. Phelps was a most constant attendant, was at that time without a settled pastor, although the blessing of the Spirit was present among them.

While others were finding the Saviour precious to their souls, and rejoicing in the newly-found treasure, Mr. Phelps was long, earnestly, and most anxiously uttering the heart-cry, "What shall I do to be saved?"

He, of all others, whom we should sup-

pose would be the first to see clearly the way, and speedily enter the open door of mercy and forgiveness, was for weeks groping in thick darkness and anguish of spirit. He had a most faithful and earnest counsellor and wise Christian friend in his employer, and he ever after cherished a lively and loving appreciation of the influence exerted over his heart and life by the example and precept of this elder brother in Christ. Other Christian friends labored with and fervently prayed for him, that the clouds of doubt might be removed from his soul, and the glorious Sun of righteousness shine upon him; but the work was between himself and his God. It would indeed seem as if Satan, seeing in him those elements, which, if subdued and sanctified by the Spirit, would render him a powerful foe to his own evil designs, "desired to have him, that he might sift

him as wheat," blinding his eyes, that he should not see the way of life.

But the gracious words of Jesus to Peter fully applied to this young man: "But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." That prayer was in his case, also, fully answered. Sin and Satan were vanquished by the sword of the Lord, and light dawned on the clouded understanding; so that he saw clearly the open door of pardon by grace, and joyfully he entered in, humble, penitent, and believing. From that day forward his "path was like that of the just, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

And well did he obey the injunction of Christ to Peter, following the promise, or assurance, given above: "And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." He could not be satisfied with doubtful evidence that a saving change had been wrought in his heart; but he would be

sure that his foundation was on the Rock Christ Jesus.

And we believe that the hope he then indulged was ever after firm and unwavering, being to him at all times "as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, which entereth in to that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus." And as was his hope, so was his faith, or rather in preparation to his faith so was the measure of his hope. As faith is the substance of things hoped for, so there can be no true hope without an underlying faith.

Mr. Phelps experienced no ecstasy of joy, no flashes of light, — for that was not in his nature, — either before or after conversion. His was a calm, settled, abiding peace; a clear, distinct, and ever-increasing light, which was so displayed in all his life that others, seeing it, took knowledge of him that he had been with Jesus. And

thus he glorified the power and loving kindness of his Father in heaven.

We think it was not until sometime during the following year that Mr. Phelps made a public profession of his faith in Christ, uniting himself with the Edwards Church, which had then secured the services of an able, faithful, and beloved pastor. His place was seldom vacant in the sanctuary on the Sabbath; where he delighted to mingle the tones of his sweet voice in the songs of praise. In the Sabbath-school, his seat was always filled, and whether as pupil or teacher, he was ever ready for his work.

And whoever might be away from the evening meetings for conference and prayer, Spencer Phelps never failed to be present when he was in town, unless he was absolutely ill. If he were not there it was sure to elicit inquiry; for there, must be some special reason.



After he engaged in business for himself, all his engagements, as far as practicable, were so arranged as to give leisure for the Friday evening meeting. If business called him out of town, it must, if possible, be on some other day of the week. And if he were necessarily absent, he never failed to remember the hour of social prayer in the vestry.

As we shall see, when we by and by glance at some passages from his letters, whether in camp or on the crowded, uncomfortable voyage, on the weary march, on picket duty, or in the lingering siege of Port Hudson, his thoughts never failed to turn, with loving remembrance and earnest longings, to the place he loved so well, at the chosen hour of prayer. Though absent in body, he was ever present in Spirit.

To one so modest and retiring as Mr. Phelps, with a native diffidence, and

shrinking from observation, it must have been a real cross to him when he first came forward and took an active part in the more public services of the church. But love for his Saviour was paramount to every other feeling; and when he was brought to feel that a certain course of action was demanded of him, all other and more selfish considerations must yield to this one all-controlling principle of love and duty to his Master.

He was exceedingly fond of music, both vocal and instrumental, especially of sacred music, and he very often led the songs of praise, with instrument and voice, in the meetings in the lecture-room.

For years his melodeon was a chosen friend, a cheerful and delightful companion, comforting in hours of solitude and sadness, and giving a glad expression to his more joyous feelings and the devotional utterances of his heart.

It was, if we may be allowed the expression, as a medium of communion between his soul and his God. It gave sweet sound to his morning and evening thanksgiving, accompanied by his voice. Many of our choicest and most devotional songs of supplication and praise are linked with the precious memories of this departed friend and brother, by associations which time will never efface from the heart.

But when the familiar strains shall move the tender spirit and moisten the eye, may the thoughts rise on the wings of faith and behold him joyfully tuning his golden lyre to strains more glad and sweet than ever answered to his touch while tarrying on these shores of time.

In the winter and spring of 1858, a most refreshing and effective outpouring of the Holy Spirit was enjoyed by many churches which had long mourned the

desolations of Zion. The churches in Northampton shared largely in this good work. The hearts of Christians received a fresh baptism from on high, calling into new life and greater activity the graces of the heart.

And many sinners were taught the way to the cross, and listened to the gracious, full, and free invitation of the Saviour, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest."

Mr. Phelps entered into this blessed work with fervent zeal and renewed consecration of life and labor. Inquiring souls were taken by the hand and led to Christ. Doubting hearts were cheered and enlightened by his words of hopeful trust, and stimulated to nobler effort by the example of his faithful, earnest, devoted life. Those who listened to his voice of prayer were impressed with the truth that he was familiar with the mercy-seat, and often held sweet and intimate communion with

his God and Saviour. Such humility, such confiding trust, and such evident nearness of approach to the throne of grace, are experienced only by those who walk closely with God.

His God was in truth not a God that was far off; but he was nigh him, even in his heart. He was faithful and constant in the observance of daily seasons of secret prayer. And what growing, fruit-bearing Christian is ever found, who is careless of this most blessed privilege of secret converse with the one infinite, compassionate, unfailing Friend?

It was the pleasing testimony of this Christian brother that he never engaged in any pursuit, or attempted any labor, or formed what might be called even trifling plans, without first looking to God for direction and blessing. How much more glorious would be "the record by the

angels kept," if all Christians would follow his example !

After this, we need hardly mention that, as a business man, Mr. Phelps was most scrupulously exact and honorable. To those in his employ he was just and faithful, mindful of his responsibility to regard their interests, both of body and soul.

From the season of revival to which allusion has been made, Mr. Phelps may truly be said to have been in spiritual "labors more abundant." The Sabbath was to him anything but a day of rest, though it was a day of sweet delight. Sometimes for months together he was accustomed each Sabbath to attend a young men's prayer-meeting, at half-past nine in the morning, and from there to the sanctuary service. One-half the intermission at noon, he was in the Sabbath-school, faithfully discharging the duties of a teacher, and he was invariably present at

the afternoon service, where he was not a listless hearer, but an earnestly attentive listener.

And then, again, after this, he would go to one of the outposts of the town, where he, with others, was engaged in conducting a mission Sabbath-school, and often, if not generally, was found still again at the third service in the vestry.

We would hardly venture to prescribe this routine of Sabbath labor for every one; for it would prove too wearisome to the flesh, at least, if not exhausting to the spirit also.

But to our friend it was not an irksome duty; for he entered into all these labors cheerfully, heartily, and conscientiously. Surely, he did not lose his reward, inasmuch as he did it for his Lord and Master, who regards the laborers in his vineyard.

We have before spoken of the unusually retentive memory of Mr. Phelps. His

pastor might be always cheered by the thought that, in storm or sunshine, heat or cold, morning or afternoon, he was sure to have one attentive auditor. He also well knew that he could never preach a sermon the second time, without having it recognized by at least one of his congregation. The pastor remarked this to a brother clergyman one day, and added,—

“In passing out of church one Sabbath, a brother said to him, ‘That was a capital sermon.’ With a quiet smile, Mr. P. replied, ‘Yes, I always liked it.’”



## CHAPTER IV.

WE may be dwelling too long on the more private Christian life of this brother in Christ. If so, we crave pardon, hoping that this glance at his modest, unassuming, but consistent piety will not be wholly in vain. We would rejoice to see the mantle of this young man resting on those who remain, while his labors on earth are closed.

We now come to the notice of another change in the quiet life of Mr. Phelps. It must not be supposed that these years of boarding and business occupations had made his warm, loving heart insensible to the joys and attractions of domestic life, and a high appreciation of home comforts.

He looked forward, with fond longing and reasonable anticipation, to the time when he should bring to his heart and to his own home some warm, affectionate, congenial spirit, who should gladden all his pathway by her bright, loving presence and confiding trust,—not only a trust in himself, as worthy of whole-hearted affection, but also a willing trust in the Saviour whom he loved so well. But in this, as in all other things, he was willing to wait God's time, and bide the leadings of Providence. Nor did he wait and trust in vain.

There were various reasons which tended, in his case, to prevent a very early marriage. Business was not very lively for some time in any department, and in the building line the quiet village of Northampton was nearly at a "stand-still" point. There was considerable competition, and, as a young man, Mr. Phelps had first a

mechanical reputation to establish, before he could reasonably expect much patronage.

Besides, he was, both by nature and from principle, benevolent, and gave freely and liberally in proportion to his means. As might be expected from a man of his character, he had a system by which his Christian charities were regulated.

For a long time previous to his marriage, it was his fixed custom to lay aside one dollar each week for objects of Christian benevolence. After his marriage, as his expenses were of course increased, the weekly sum was reduced to seventy-five cents. This did not, of course, embrace by any means all his donations, but merely the sum consecrated to what may be termed religious charities. He possessed a loving and sympathizing heart, which often led him to open his purse on other occasions. But his offerings were always

made quietly, and in accordance with the teaching of the Saviour, "not to let the left hand know what the right hand doeth."

If all professing Christians would give systematically and in proportion to their ability, as he did, the treasury of the Lord would be filled as it never has yet been. And not for one year alone, but the sum would go on increasing from year to year, until speedily the means would be furnished for sending the gospel into all lands, and proclaiming it to every creature. And this, too, without at all neglecting to care for the poor and needy whom we have always with us, and whenever we will we may do them good. This system was not carried out with no self-sacrifice on his part; for if it had been, the sweetness of giving would be lost.

The Lord had blessings in store for his faithful servant, and graciously allowed him to realize, for a brief season, the

precious comforts and the heart enjoyments of domestic life with the chosen one of his soul's pure affections, which he had been looking forward to with bright anticipations.

Mr. Phelps was married, Nov. 28, 1861, to Miss Lizzie Sammis, of South Deerfield, Mass. After a few pleasant days of travel and visiting, he bore his lovely bride to the home made ready for her reception. Not only was the home ready, but in the church and society cordial hands and warm hearts were ready to give her a loving welcome,—welcome for her own sake, and thrice welcome as the wife of one they all esteemed and appreciated so highly. Many were the complimentary but most sincere congratulations that were offered, and kindly wishes heartily expressed to them for long-continued happiness.

And they were happy,—really and rationally happy; and with fervent hearts they

gave thanks to God for present joy. Their hearts were united to each other by a pure and holy affection ; mutually united by a still purer and holier love to the same heavenly Father and blessed Redeemer ; and united in their aims and efforts faithfully to serve and glorify him.

No one could fail to observe that Mr. Phelps now experienced a new joy. It shone in the loving sparkle of his eye, and lingered in the brighter smile on his countenance. It told in every feature of his face and in all his actions.

His heart was satisfied. His bright hopes and fond anticipations were more than realized. The present home joys and peace were more precious than the pictured future had promised. The past years of his life had furnished an experience which fitted him to enjoy and justly appreciate the blessings of home that now encircled him so fondly.

As a husband, he was kind, considerate, and indulgent, never speaking a hasty or irritating word, never giving an unkind look. His devotion to the duties of this new relation was second only to a supreme devotion to a higher covenant.

## CHAPTER V.

WE approach the time when these delightful pleasures and these peaceful pursuits must be broken off, and exchanged for sterner duties and self-sacrificing labors,—for a life in itself absolutely and entirely uncongenial.

When our country was first aroused by the electric truth that a determined foe had risen up in open and hostile rebellion to our government, casting off all allegiance, utterly repudiating the sacred compact which had so long bound together this sisterhood of States, every soul was stirred as never before. There was a perfect outpouring of enthusiastic patriotism, although with shame it must be con-



ceded that there were very many at the North whose hearts were stirred with foulest treason.

But we believe there was scarcely a truly loyal man who did not think within himself, "Have I a call to serve my country by shouldering knapsack and musket, and marching to the defence of our blood-bought honor?" No man could do less than *think* what his personal duty was at such a time.

Mr. Phelps certainly was not a man to forget all sense of personal responsibility in such a crisis as then appeared, and has ever since hung over our beloved nation.

But when the repeated calls for volunteers during the first year of this fearful strife were so promptly and fully responded to by even more than were demanded, there really seemed to be no special reason for regarding it as his duty

to enlist, and therefore he steadily pursued his peaceful path.

It will be remembered that it was during that year that he formed another union, more private to be sure, but not less sacred, than the grand union of the States in this republic.

Spencer Phelps could not be classed among the so-called "radical abolitionists," but in reality he most certainly was radically an anti-slavery man. The gospel of Christ, as he understood it, was opposed in all its teachings, both in the spirit and the letter, to the holding of human beings in bondage. He believed the Golden Rule applied equally to the mutual relations of all men, black and white.

He saw clearly that this deep-plotted rebellion had its origin in the baneful, inhuman system of slavery; that it was not therefore to be solely a war for defence of our noble government and the rights of a

nation; but it must be, in the end, a struggle for human freedom and the restoration of individual, God-given liberty to all classes in our land, South and North.

The yoke of the oppressor must be broken from the necks of millions of immortal beings, and the oppressed must go free, before peace could be permanently secured. We do not say restored; for true internal peace has never existed, and could not so long as this revolting institution existed in any section of the country.

The government must be, under God, the instrument to accomplish this grand result: "to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke." This was the work before the nation, and to secure this glorious consummation, no sacrifice could be too great, no toil too severe to be manfully shared.

The government, then, must be sus-

tained, — a government noble in its foundation principles, beneficent in its workings, and grand in its achievements hitherto, — not faultless to be sure, but still the best government on the face of the earth; and doubly dear and thrice honored by the heart of every true citizen for the infant baptism it received in the precious blood of our heroic ancestors. Thus consecrated, and ordained of God to carry the cup of salvation to many nations, shall it be left to totter and fall, for lack of willing hearts and ready hands to bear it on to victory? Never! oh, never!

So when, in the summer of 1862, there came a call from “Father Abraham for three hundred thousand more,” Mr. Phelps began seriously and prayerfully to consider the question whether the call did not come to him individually. There was not in his nature a single element but what would shrink from the scenes and pur-

suits of a soldier's life. Pre-eminently a peace man, could he go to war? We shall see.

In one scale was the young, loving, and beloved wife; the pleasant, newly-consecrated home; an aged widowed mother, whose heart clung tenderly to this her youngest born; brother, sisters, and a host of friends; satisfactory business arrangements; and not least among these objections to going appeared the precious religious privileges that his soul so richly enjoyed. Besides all this, there were the dangers and uncertainties of war, with tastes and inclinations wholly at variance with all its terrible details.

In the other scale was simply duty, — loyalty to his God and his country. And in his mind the one was entirely inseparable from the other. If his country demanded and needed his services, it was to him the sacred call of God.

Surely, we know that he who humbly sought for divine guidance and assistance in all the minor duties of every-day life did not attempt to solve this important question without weighing the subject carefully, and earnestly praying for direction, that he might not err in his decision.

The more he thought and the more he prayed, the clearer seemed the path before him, and the inner voice whispered more distinctly to his listening ear, "This is the way; walk thou in it." He was fully satisfied that this was truly the will of God concerning him, even that he should turn from all that was so dear to his manly heart, and go forth and offer himself upon his country's altar, in the service of his Master. And yet there was one condition to his going. He could not feel it right to go in direct opposition to his friends, and he must first secure their consent. And could they give their assent to such a step?

Say rather could they refuse it? Could they hold him back, much and powerfully as the loving heart impelled them to detain him? — could they keep him from obeying what he fully believed to be the call of duty? He felt, to use his own words, in talking with a friend, —

“If I may not go, I can no longer consistently pray for the success of the Union cause. Some must go, or the cause is irretrievably lost. There is no reason why I cannot go, that does not apply almost equally to all other men. If my friends keep me back, then I must cease to pray that our cause may prosper, and our government be sustained.”

In such a case, consent could not be withheld; however reluctantly and tearfully, it must be granted. It was right. Though dark and crushing the result, it was right that he should go. It was the mission appointed him by God. There

should be no misgivings now. He asked wisdom, and we doubt not that he asked "in faith, nothing doubting." And he who has promised to give liberally heard and answered the petition for direction. On this assurance let the heart rest, in full and sweet submission to the will of infinite wisdom.

In August, 1862, Spencer Phelps enrolled his name as a volunteer in the service of the United States. He joined Company C, which was composed entirely of Northampton boys, of the 52d Mass. Regt., which encamped at Greenfield. We have seen him as a private Christian; henceforth he is a Christian private.



## CHAPTER V.

THE 52d was a nine months' regiment, and the term of absence did not seem so very, very long to look forward to; yet the actual parting was much more painful than was anticipated by Spencer Phelps. He did not realize how much he was attached to his pleasant, new-found home, nor how closely and tenderly his heart was bound to the wife of his love. And other friends and associations seemed more than ever precious. But having put his hand to the plough, he was not a man to turn back, or shrink from the sacrifice. All the trials and hardships of the new life before him were to be met with a hopeful, cheerful spirit, making the best of every-

thing. The path of duty is always the path of real safety, however dark it may appear.

The company went into camp at Greenfield, Sept. 29th, where they remained nearly two months, waiting for the regiment to be filled up, officered, and drilled.

We shall, as much as consistent, quote from his letters, giving his own expressions of his feelings and experience. His solicitude was more for the loved ones, to whom his going forth would bring so much of loneliness and anxiety, than for himself, deeply as his own heart felt the separation. And his righteous soul was sadly vexed from day to day in witnessing the sin and iniquity with which he was brought into contact as he had never been before. There were many upright, noble Christian young men in the company, who often took sweet counsel together and united in social

prayer ; but the mass of them were far from God and righteousness.

In early life Mr. Phelps had been accustomed to observe Saturday evening as holy time, and a feeling of its sacredness still clung to him, even through all the vicissitudes of soldier life. He writes, the first Saturday evening of camp life, —

“It is Saturday evening, a time which I used to keep as part of the Sabbath, and even now there comes over me a feeling that it is not quite ordinary time.”

“Sabbath morn. A bright and beautiful day, after a stormy and windy night, — the holy Sabbath-day, —

‘Sweet on this day of rest,  
To join with heart and voice.’

We have been singing in the tent this morning from ‘Sabbath Bell’ and other books. Though it seems little like the Sabbath, we will try to spend the day as in the sight of God. I long for the time

to come when we shall again go to the house of God in company. Will we not think more and more of our eternal home, and feel that the friendship and love so begun on earth will *not* close when our life here is ended? But it is sweet to live, especially when we have loved ones around us.

"Sabbath eve. I went out and walked the grounds for some time this evening, spending part of the time in prayer for myself and my friends. We must put our trust in our heavenly Father for all that is to come. There is none that can give us peace but God. We had a good meeting in our tent this eve, which I enjoyed very much.

"There is talk here that we are going to Texas, the farthest point to which we could be sent. Can you give me up to go so far away? Yes, you can, if you have strength given you from above. Be not

sad, dearest. Christ says, 'He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.' Take all the promises for your own. We will sweetly leave ourselves in God's hands, resigned, if possible, to *all* that may come. Oh, let us love our Saviour more; for he is worthy. While we are separated, let us lean more upon that Friend who sticketh closer than a brother. Do we realize that he is a better Friend to us than we can be to each other? Let us, then, no more be sad, but amid all our trials feel that he is ever near."

Another Sabbath he writes, —

"We had to drill a few minutes this morning, and I tried to think that we were not doing wrong. Pray for me that I may never forget the sacredness of this day, but keep it holy. Oh, what a dreadful business is war! But if we seek to do right, we shall be blessed always. How I

long to get away alone and enjoy my devotions as I used to do !”

“I have been walking out over the grounds, and the beautiful sky, the fields, and the trees all speak of a God ‘whose tender mercies are over all his works.’ But in looking down upon those who are gathered here I am reminded of these words : —

‘every prospect pleases,  
And only man is vile.’

There are many good men here, but, oh, how many sinful, wicked creatures, who seem to have no idea of the high end for which they were created ! I want to do them some good, but hardly know how. We shall have a meeting this evening at a little past seven, and I hope we may have God’s blessing.”

At another time he says, —

“It will be very hard to be separated this long winter ; but shall we not take

comfort in the thought that the same Being watches over all? In all our afflictions he is afflicted, and no sigh of his children escapes his notice. Is it not to be for our good? Shall we not both of us be led to feel that we need his help, and thus apply for it? If we are made better by these things it will be worth all the cost. I do believe that God will spare our lives to meet again; but if not, will he not give us strength to bear all? It is better to have him rule than to rule ourselves; for has he not blessed us in the past beyond measure?"

On the first Sabbath in November he writes, —

"Oh, how pleasant it would be to be with you in N——, and join with the Edwards Church in the exercises of to-day! The first Sabbath of November, 1853, I first united with the people of God, and to-day, for almost the first time, I am denied the privilege. In the afternoon, as you

partake of the emblems of the Saviour's body, I know you will think of me, and pray that although I am denied the outward form, I may not lose the blessing. May we so remember him to-day that the blessings of his Spirit shall abide with us for many, many days !”

Again he says, —

“ We must look on the bright side, — make the best of all things, and then for the rest lean on God. It is very hard for me to leave my home and loved ones ; but I resolve it all into duty, and having decided that question, I will try to make the best of it. ‘Blessed is the man that endureth temptation or trial.’ I mean to be cheerful.”

At another time : —

“ To-morrow evening will be Friday. How often have we met in the vestry with a few of God's people and sung together the songs of Zion ! But let not the



remembrance make us sad, but rather thankful that we have so often shared this privilege. And let us pray that God will spare our lives, again to enjoy those blessed seasons.

“Oh, how sad the condition of our country, — brother fighting against brother! And no one can see the end; but God can so order events that peace shall soon return. Pray for our country, and for the soldiers, *all of them.*”

While at Camp Miller, Mr. Phelps was frequently allowed the pleasure of seeing his friends, at their homes sometimes, and occasionally on the camp-grounds. But at each meeting and parting he realized more fully how much it ‘cost’ both him and them; still, he did not regret the step he had taken. Duty called and he manfully obeyed.

“And is thy purpose fixed to tread  
The path by God assigned to thee? Then turn

Not back, but, eagle-like, press sunward on ;  
Have but an eye on God, as surely he  
Will have an eye on thee ; press on ! press on !”

But the hour of final separation drew near, and came at last. The last good-by must be spoken, or expressed, if not in words. Though tearfully, it was hopefully given, cheered by the bright, glad hope that in a few months there would be a joyful reunion, all the sweeter and more precious for the experience of these days of sadness. A merciful and wise Father has lovingly veiled the future from our eyes, and bids us leave all that to his unerring direction. In his own best time and way he will make known to us his designs.

Just before leaving Camp Miller, Mr. Phelps writes, —

“We have our trials, but we have also many mercies. Let us not displease God by dwelling too much upon the former and

forgetting the latter. Oh, the privilege of prayer and hearts to pray are gifts of his for which we should praise him continually.

"It is hard leaving friends; but there is nothing in this world but the heart will get used to it, though it may cost a fearful struggle. We often make ourselves needless trouble by dwelling on the future, when we are only required to bear the burdens of the day. God only knows the future, and *whatever* we are called to he will give his people strength to bear. Let us trust in God and try to do our duty."

The regiment left Greenfield on the afternoon of November 20th, taking cars for New York, expecting soon to join Banks's expedition, to go to some, as yet unrevealed, Southern port. It was a dark, dismal, rainy day, and as they passed through Northampton just at dusk, it would be strange if there were not many hearts,

both within and about the cars, that most sadly recollected the gloom of nature. It was indeed a dreary and outwardly cheerless ride through the long dark night, but only a faint foreshadowing of the weariness, discomforts, and dangers of a soldier's life.

Many a brave heart that throbbed with almost melting tenderness as they caught a last glimpse of familiar faces and objects, yet beat strong with hope and courage, felt willing cheerfully to dare all and endure all, for the sake of a nation's welfare, — for Freedom's righteous cause.

## CHAPTER VII.

DURING the night, Mr. Phelps, as probably many others also, beguiled somewhat the tediousness of the way by scribbling, as best they could, to the loved ones left behind. He writes, —

"I am cheerful and happy, feeling that I am in the path of duty. 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.' May I trust in Him who doeth all things well! Only as he helps me can I bear this heavy load." The profanity and lawlessness of many of his comrades made him, as he expressed it, "almost ashamed of his company."

At New Haven they were *packed* on

board a boat, and reached New York in the early morning, when he adds, —

“The light of day begins to reveal the city of New York. I hope we shall see more of it to-day; but I have no wish to live here. There are thousands of dwellings where the light scarcely enters; but this is only a faint emblem of the moral darkness that settles over them. It is cloudy, and the city looks gloomy; but in my soul there is peace.”

We see how every sight or experience suggested to his mind the great truth that we are immortal beings, lost in sin only as we are saved by accepting the offers of salvation through Christ. And yet it was not with a gloomy, disheartened spirit at all. He was always interested in observing all that was worth seeing, both in the works of nature and of art.

The first evening they were in New York, stationed at the Franklin Street

Barracks, was Friday, when as usual the thoughts of our friend turned to the vestry. He says, —

“There is the floor to sleep on, your knapsack to sit on, your knees to write upon ; so we are well provided for. There are a great many rough fellows here, and, as I wrote, if it were not for a few good ones, I should wish myself at home. You do not know how much such become attached to each other when there are so many of the other sort all around. It is Friday evening, and I can think of the Edwards Church as meeting for prayer.”

From New York, they went into camp for a few days at Jamaica, Long Island, when they had their “first experience in marching with knapsacks,” but got along very well ; and he also tells his home friends, —

“Do not feel too anxious about me, nor think that I am suffering ; for we have things quite comfortable.”

Music was, as we have before mentioned, a great amusement and comfort to him, and he playfully said before leaving home that, "if he could only take his melodeon with him, he should get along nicely."

So in a rainy evening when he felt "lonesome," if he could borrow a violin in the company, and have a good sing, "singing those tunes we used to sing at home," it would cheer him greatly. Who needs the charms of music if not the soldier?

On Thanksgiving Day he speaks of the nice eatables sent from home friends and adds, —

"We ate all we wanted, and still we wanted more. What was it do you think? What could it be but the joys of home and the sight of those we love? I trust we felt thankful that friends had remembered us so kindly, and we enjoyed it much. If we could only spend the rest of the day at home, our cup would be full."



"Friday Morning, Nov. 28th. It seems decided that we leave here to-day. We know nothing where we are going; some think to Charleston, others up the James River, and others still to Texas. We are packing up, and expect a tiresome march to New York. I read the ninety-first Psalm this morning, 'and hope I can put my trust in Him.'"

They went on board the steamer "Illinois," as he expected, but did not sail for two days. The steamer was most densely crowded, so much so as to be exceedingly uncomfortable. Mr. Phelps gives a little description of his quarters.

"I might tell you something of our *home*, — that is, where we sleep and spend more than half our time. Imagine, then, a place about six feet by seven, with boards for a floor, and just about *two* feet high, and that this is the abode of five besides myself, with our knapsacks, over-

coats, canteens, haversacks, and blankets, and you have a faint idea of it. Then the light in our bunk (some are better) is not sufficient to read by, so that we have darkness whether we love it or not. Of course even an *upright sitting* posture is impossible, and I feel as never before the force of the passage, 'God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.' We had a little better place, but were changed to-day to get the company together. I have realized more than before the magnitude of an expedition like this. Will the war ever end? In some respects it seems to me that it looks darker than ever; but we will hope for the best. I feel discouraged sometimes on account of the wickedness of the army; it seems as though God would not bless us. Still may we not hope that there are more righteous in proportion than ten were in Sodom, and that God will save us for their

sakes? I feel that if God does again give us a country, it will be for the sake of his church, and it becomes them to feel how much depends upon them, and to pray earnestly for the land. We will keep up good courage and do our best. I am feeling well."

"If you could look in upon us with your ideas of neatness, you would think that we could not live; but I think we can if careful, and I will try to be."

When the "Illinois" and the other vessels were some days out, they encountered a "rough sea," and the men experienced the usual consequences of sea-sickness.

"Sabbath Noon, Dec. 7th. I resume my writing to-day, having been unable for two days to do much in any line. Have been blessed with that delightful sensation called 'sea-sickness,' and must say that I do not wish for a repetition. Before Friday, the sea began to be rough, and on that

day there was sickness enough. Much more than half were sick, some terribly so, and for the time officers were no better than privates. No lack of rations that day. When we were a little better, we longed for something from home, and wanted something good to drink, which we could not get. We felt to say with David, 'Oh that one would give me to drink of the water of the well which is' *at home!* Salt water distilled is not the best. The sun shines bright and warm to-day as we sit on deck; the men are very quiet. Many are reading Testaments (there is nothing else to read), and many are writing. We think of home-scenes, but are not discontented, and try to make it seem like the Sabbath. Shall we not prize our privileges more than ever if we live to return?"

"Dec. 8th. We have been steaming on for nearly six days, and have now reached the most southern point in our voyage.

In the course of the day we shall change our course to the west and enter the Gulf of Mexico. The Florida coast has been in sight several times.

"Our rations are not the best,—nor, we think, as good as they might be. Two rations a day are enough; we should object to any more as much as the minister did to having his salary raised: 'It was all he could do to get what he had.'"

"Dec. 9th. We are in the Gulf. The wind is strong and raises a sea that makes many of us almost sick again. This talk about being 'rocked in the cradle of the deep' sounds very pretty; but when it comes to be experienced by a landsman, it loses more than half its charm. But then this is nothing; a better time will come by and by.

"I will enclose a letter to the Edwards Church. Some Friday evening, if you are there, when there has been a pause of

about five minutes, if you cannot do better, you may occupy a few moments in reading it."

"Thursday, 11th. We are hoping to reach Ship Island to-day."

"Friday. We cast anchor here at Ship Island about four o'clock yesterday. 'Tis not much of a place, only a sandy island. Other steamers are coming in. Our passage was made in nine days to an hour; but it is two weeks to-day since we set foot on land. We are feeling better now all of us, and quite like ourselves. You need not worry about us; for the little hardships we have endured will do us no harm. What the future will bring we do not know; but we trust nothing very bad.

"13th. Some boats coming in since we did had a harder passage than we. We hope to get a little later mail, but may not. We long for news. The air is like May in Massachusetts; so you see what we

gain by going to war. It is said that we do not go ashore, but sail to-day for somewhere. A mail has just come in, but nothing for me."

¶ We give some extracts from the letter to the Edwards Church to which Mr. Phelps alluded, not alone to represent his own feelings, but with the hope that it may prove as words of counsel and encouragement to other churches, to all Christians. It was written, —

"Off the coast of Florida, Sunday, Dec. 7th, 1862. Sitting here on the deck of this vessel, on this pleasant Sabbath-day, far removed from those scenes in which I have often mingled, I feel moved to address a few words to those with whom I have often 'taken sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company.' It is twelve years since I first became acquainted with any of you. I well remember the first night I spent with my em-

ployer in Northampton,—how I went with him to church in the evening, there being some religious interest at the time. I heard a discourse from the text ‘He shall be like the heath in the desert, he shall not see when good cometh.’

“I have great reason to be thankful that I was placed in the family of one who was so faithful to the souls of those about him, and who taught me by precept and example to frequent the house of God. Ever since that time I have been with you, and as it was there that I first received the word of God into my heart, it is not strange that I feel for the Edwards Church an attachment such as I can never have for another. As often as Friday evening comes, I think of you as meeting in the old vestry, to offer social prayer and to receive comfort and instruction from God’s word. I know that you will be few in number this winter, unless God pours out



his Spirit upon you, and you will be tempted to discouragement; but let your hearts be strong in the Lord. Christ says of his disciples, 'As thou hast sent me into the world; even so also have I sent them into the world,' and we must not murmur or despond if we, his followers, are left almost alone in the world. His people may be few in number; but he knows them all, and hears their prayers. You cannot feel so much alone as do the Christians in this regiment, who are compelled to hear the name of their God and Saviour blasphemed many times every day, and where it seems often as though none 'sought after God.' But there are many praying souls in this regiment and in the army everywhere, and it may be that God will hear their prayers. To what dignity are we thus exalted! And yet it should make us more humble and prayerful.

"This war is, we think, full of evil ten-

dencies, and so it has many ; but has it not also many good ones? Has there not been more real prayer for the country within the past two years than for a long time before? It is more real because we have been led by passing events more and more to feel that God alone can help us. Some who go to the war will come back, we trust, stronger and more devoted Christians because of the dangers and difficulties that they have had to contend with.

"And of those who remain at home and send their loved ones, will not many a mother and wife and sister learn new lessons of patience under trials, and of trust in God, and of prayer for their country, because they have so great a personal interest in its welfare?

"We feel that we are far from home. What part we are to bear in putting down this rebellion time alone can tell.

"As there are more than eleven hun-

dred souls on board, it is a good place to learn human nature, and to see how the patriotism of the men endures the test which the many discomforts to which we are subject bring upon it. Some cannot endure it, and wish themselves at home and leave the Union to take care of itself. These are generally those who talk the loudest and swear the most.

"But there are many who endure the trials very patiently. The little Testaments are read a great deal. We hope, and have reason to believe, that many who have never done so will be led to accept for themselves the promises and invitations of the gospel. These seem to many of us more precious than ever before.

"How glorious, dear brethren, is our inheritance if we are Christ's,—all things needful in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting! Let us take the full comfort of these promises, and be in-

spired by them to renewed faithfulness to our blessed Lord and Master.

"I need not ask you, dear friends, to remember in your prayers those who are here from the Edwards Church; for I know that we are not forgotten. There are several here, most of them from among the lambs of the flock. I am happy to be able to give a good account of them so far, and trust that they are walking in the path of duty. Let us not despair. His kingdom shall not fail."

We will give just a single closing extract from a letter written to the Sabbath-school: —

"The love of Christ led him to earth to die, that '*whosoever will*' might take of the water of life freely. Dear children, this wonder is revealed in the Bible that you study. Love, then, this book; accept its invitations; be forever blessed."

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE next date is Baton Rouge, Dec. 17th.

"My letter is dated from a place we did not expect to occupy the first night on land, after leaving Long Island; but so it is. We left Ship Island Saturday, P. M., and Sunday morning found us at the mouth of the Mississippi River, waiting for a pilot. One soon came, and we pushed on up the river. The day was beautiful, and though it was the Sabbath, we saw much that was new and will be long remembered. Reached New Orleans early in the evening and anchored. In the morning I, with many, went on shore, and to the market,

where we had a breakfast which really tasted good.

"Tuesday noon we started up the river. In the afternoon guns and ammunition were given out, which looked serious. Went slowly much of the night. There were eight or nine transports loaded with troops and three or four gunboats, one iron-clad. Came along to this place, and at nine in the morning the iron-clad began to throw shells into the city. There were but few troops here, and they ran away, and a flag of truce was sent to the boat when the firing ceased. Troops began to land, and at three P. M. we had our tents pitched in the city. Thus far, God has protected us, and though we are always in danger in these parts, we will try to trust him for the future.

"My own feelings, as I thought of the battle which seemed to be before us, you can imagine. I asked myself why I was

here when I might have been safe at home? I felt that all was right, and committed myself and my all to God. May he be the strong habitation to which we shall continually resort!

"The city looks desolate and forlorn, and is a good specimen of what war will do for a country. You at the North have reason to be thankful that your towns are not the theatre of conflict. This is a life that I have little taste for; but I am willing to serve my country."

"25th. This is Christmas, though we shall not see much of it. Our drill, however, will be less than usual, and if we can get hold of anything good to eat, we are at liberty to do so. There is little for sale here, molasses and corn-cakes being the principal things.

"We had a prayer-meeting last evening in an iron-foundry building, which, being Christmas eve, was unusually interesting.

Our chaplain seems a truly Christian man, and is well liked. He spoke last Sabbath, as he has done before, very plainly of profanity and its great sinfulness. There are many truly Christian men in the regiment, and their restraining influence ought to be very great.

"Many of the men are unfit for duty. It needs the greatest care and a good constitution. It is not the hard work generally in an army that works mischief, but the exposure, change of climate, irregular hours of sleeping, and excesses in eating those things which are obtained only occasionally that injure the health of soldiers. My health is good. I do long to hear from you all."

About this time a part of the 52d were ordered to Plaquemine, a place some twenty miles below Baton Rouge. From this place our friend writes of the slaves, —

"Negroes come into our lines, though



we have refused some, because we have nothing for them to do, or to eat either. Some provision ought to be made for them. They ought to be free, and I hope they may be ; but it wants more than human wisdom to bring it about. We may declare them free ; but they can get away from the plantations only in small numbers. The North can never raise armies sufficient to penetrate the interior and to possess it ; and what can be done ? And then, if freed, what can be done with them for a time until there is an entire change in society at the South, and they can be hired as they should be ? I hope that God has some way of accomplishing that which to us seems so difficult. I think on the whole they ought to be armed and take the place of our soldiers, which I believe they are capable of doing."

"Truly God has some way of overcoming all these obstacles. As a government

and nation, through the leadings and teachings of his providence are we not now constantly obtaining

“ ‘ By slow degrees, by more and more,  
The cloudy summit of our time? ’ ”

Mr. Phelps designed to write a monthly letter to the Sabbath-school of which he still felt himself a member, or at least for some months he did so, whether premeditated or not. We give from time to time brief extracts from these letters.

In his January letter, after wishing them a ‘ Happy New Year,’ and saying many pleasant things, he adds, —

“ Many say, ‘ I would become a Christian if I could.’ Is it true, do you think? Come and see if it is. And come to Christ, ye who hope you are his, and see if there is not a higher life that you have not yet reached. Words cannot express his blessedness to those who truly receive him. One may be far from home

and friends, and exposed to peril and sufferings ; but the soul may still be at peace. I have with me a little text-book given me just before going into camp, containing a short passage for each day in the month. For this evening it is this, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.' How comforting ! how unlimited ! Queen Esther, though the wife of the king, went into his presence doubting whether she would be received., The man of violence who hung by the side of Jesus, though a stranger, at the last hour of life breathed out, 'Lord, remember me ;' and the gracious Saviour replied, 'To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.'

"So may we all at last hear him welcome us to our eternal home !"

At another time he says, —

"Little of interest has occurred since I wrote to break the monotony of camp-life. On Sabbath (of course, what other day

would do?) we were ordered to move our quarters to another part of the town. A large part of the day was spent in getting settled. It is apt to be so; if any extra work is to be done, the Sabbath is chosen. We found houses to accommodate all; we have tables to eat on, and to write on, and are quite civilized."

"The South injure themselves more than any one else by the war; but human nature is apt to make that mistake. 'His mischief shall return upon his own head,' will be eminently true of the South in this war."

"The more I see of the 'peculiar institution,' the more hateful and villanous it appears. As Gen. Butler says, a man who can live at the South in these times and not be an abolitionist must be incorrigible. I have seen and talked with those who have run away, and find, though they cannot read and are kept in all possi-

ble ignorance, yet they are no fools. And the Christian influence of the institution 'I don't see.' ”

Early in February the company rejoined the regiment at Baton Rouge, and the next day Phelps writes, —

“Reached here at half-past ten last night, but stayed on the boat till morning. We slept where we could, sitting or lying in every place, on barrels, the floor, the steam-boiler, the cabin and hurricane-deck. We came off early. I was left with a few others to take the sick off, and to the hospitals. A good many are sick, which seems sad. One of our company is very sick with fever. A large part of the strength of an army is needed to take care of itself, and the darkest pictures of the war are to be seen in hospitals.”

“Feb. 21st. It is now Saturday P. M., a day whose closing hours remind me as much as any of home and the scenes left

behind. It seems as if the Sabbath ought to be spent at home ; for there is no better place to pass the day. I was always glad to have the day come, after a week of toil ; but here there is little to be desired on that day.

"The week has passed with little of interest in our camp. The most excitement was caused by the arrival of a mail Thursday eve about nine o'clock. I think there were four bushels of letters and papers, and it took five or six men an hour at least, to sort it over. Letters are worth everything."

In his February letter to the Sabbath-school, after speaking of God as the great Ruler of all things, Mr. Phelps says, —

"Have we any relations to this Being of infinite wisdom? Or is he so far above us, so exalted, that, our actions do not affect him? The catechism says 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him

forever.' The best definition I have seen of 'glorify' is to fulfil that for which we were made.

"Anything that answers the purpose for which it was made, in a limited sense, glorifies its maker, whether it is a watch, a steam-engine, or a man. A child, then, can glorify God. He cannot have the wisdom, nor the strength, nor the sober dignity of a man, nor does God require it. Nor does he ask us to be or do more than we can; but he gives us all a conscience, and tells us to use what we have for the purpose for which we were created. This soul that thinks and loves was not made in vain. This body through which the soul works was given us for some purpose.

"But above all, this heart of ours, — was it made to be filled with that hatred of God which says, 'we will not have this man to reign over us'? or with that con-

fidings trust and love which says 'My Father, thou art the guide of my youth'? Toward our fellow-men we are to cherish that love which takes real pleasure in caring for others, and in helping them in the path of peace, purity, and everlasting life. May you and I, dear friends, receive the gospel of Christ, yea, Christ himself, into our hearts, that, being thus fitted to 'glorify' God on earth, we may be welcomed at last 'into the joy of our Lord.'"

We will here give a little extract of the letter to the Sabbath-school which was written in March, —

"David, in the nineteenth Psalm, after speaking of the heavens that 'declare the glory of God,' seems to turn with greater delight to his word, because that would teach his soul the way of life. Read the psalm and see if it is not so.

"But alas ! many have taken great pains to search out the works of God, who have



never studied his word to know what they must do to be saved. Were they wise men?

"It is well, children, to see God in his works, to study his world about us, and especially in man the most wondrous of all. But when we want to become noble and good,—how to secure the favor of God, the pardon of our sins, and to save our souls at last,—let us go to his holy word. When you gave to the soldiers those little Testaments, and asked that they would read and obey them, you did for them the kindest thing you could do."

"If I could know that all the children and youth in our land were in the Sabbath-school, I should hope that when the active men now living were dead, and those children take their places, we should not see so much selfishness and strife as we do now."

About this time he writes to a friend, speaking of trials, —

"What a great means of good our present trials will be to us if we improve them aright! If we bear them patiently from right motives; if we learn those heavenly lessons of submission and dependence they are so well calculated to teach, it will be a nine months well spent. I cannot feel that we are called to it in vain, but that some good end is to be secured to us for future life. I know that life is uncertain, and especially so in the army; but we hope that God will spare our lives yet for many years."

## CHAPTER IX.

ON the 13th of March, the regiment was ordered to march, as was generally supposed, to the attack of Port Hudson, although in the sequel it appeared that such was not the design. The real object of the advance movement was secured ; but the troops were for some time wholly ignorant of its nature, and were inclined to feel that the weariness and suffering were wholly in vain.

It was a very exhausting march, and we give some sentences from letters detailing the events of the week.

The first is dated "Near Port Hudson, March 15th.

"We have fairly started on our way

about five P. M., Friday; marched some six miles that night, and at eight o'clock turned into a cotton-field and halted for the night. It was pleasant, and we did not put up our shelter-tents, but spread our rubber blankets on the ground, and lay down. Slept pretty well, and started on our way a little after sunrise, marched six or seven miles and halted. It was very warm, and many threw away blankets, etc. About three o'clock, two regiments of us moved on nearer Port Hudson, leaving blankets and overcoats. We went about four miles, some of the way double-quick, but the last of the way rather cautiously, as there had been skirmishing in the day. I suppose we went within two miles of the place, and turned back, not seeing any rebels, and night coming. Came back two miles and halted for the night. We had no blankets or overcoats, and so gathered some rails to sleep on, and lay down, all

tired and warm as we were, with nought but the sky for a covering. Fortunately it was warm, and we did not really suffer or take cold. I was very much afraid we should have to fight to-day (the Sabbath), but do not think we shall. You can judge how much it seems like the Sabbath. You are now in the Sabbath-school, I think. How different from our circumstances !”

“Tuesday, 17th. Soon after writing the above, we ‘fell in,’ and started toward Baton Rouge. It seems we were not expected to attack Port Hudson, and it is said that we were successful in what we went for. I cannot tell you anything that has been accomplished ; for it is hard finding out. But to our return.

“We took our knapsacks where we left them, and went on within six miles of Baton Rouge, where we halted for the night. An hour before, however, it began to rain, and it *did* rain. It was a thunder-shower,

which here often means a rain of a whole day. For the last two miles the mud was nearly over shoes, complete pudding. Where we stopped there was no chance to lie down, except in the water, or on logs, of which there were a few. My feet were as wet as they could be for eighteen hours. And there we stood all night in the mud and water, occasionally sitting down on a log as I did, and had two or three short naps. A few lay down in the water and went to sleep. After our march of ten miles, we thought it rather hard. The rain ceased before morning, and the sun shone considerably through the day. In the afternoon we moved three-fourths of a mile to a comparatively good place,—turf-land in furrows and ridges, the latter about wide enough for two to sleep on, in the former the water stands.

“We have endured it very well, but were tired last night and slept soundly. I have

taken no cold, and am well. We were roused before five this morning, and told to be ready to march in half an hour. It is now ten, and we are here yet. This is military all over. It is very warm.

"Wednesday Morn. We went out about six miles yesterday, to guard cotton-teams, left here soon after noon, and started on our return an hour after sunset. Were tired, you may think, when we reached here. Our traps, all of them, weigh considerable. Do not think our experience that rainy night in the water one that occurs often. I am very well except being tired. Don't feel that I shall be killed with marching; for I don't intend to be by any means. I ought to be thankful for the kind care that has attended me."

After resting a day or two, they returned to Baton Rouge.

"Friday. Just a week after we started, having marched fifty miles and thinking

we had seen something of the experience of life on a march. Most of the boys are satisfied, and do not care for another 'advance.' We are recruiting now and taking things easy. It is the Sabbath, though there is little to remind one of it. We have had no service to-day. How I miss the Sabbath and services of the sanctuary! May I soon enjoy them!

"Who can tell the suffering, or count the lives, this war has cost? Our Sabbath night one week ago, which we thought so bad, is only a drop in the bucket of misery and woe that fills our land. Thirty-one of our regiment have died since enlistment."

The following Friday, they again left Baton Rouge, marching to the river where they were "packed on board a boat as closely as was convenient, but managed to stretch out partially and get some sleep."

At daylight next morning they found themselves lying quietly at Donaldsonville,



nearly half-way to New Orleans, which had for some time been in the possession of our forces.

"March 30th. I think I felt more unwell yesterday than I have done since the first of January. Went to the hospital-tent, as I did not feel like staying in the tent with no blanket. Slept nicely.

"I feel very well this morning, and hope I shall remain so ; for there is little pleasure in being sick in the army."

The men had given their blankets in care of the quartermaster, so that they should have less burden to bear on their marches, as they expected to move into the interior.

They left Donaldsonville on Tuesday, March 31st, and marched in a direction nearly south, for three days, going forty miles, through the most beautiful portion of the State that they had yet seen ; trees and shrubbery looking like June in Massachusetts, and the weather splendid, being

perfectly clear by day and night. Still the march was a very weary one.

After marching forty miles, they struck a railroad, the first they had seen since leaving New York, "and it looked quite like home." In the course of a few days, the troops were transported by cars to Bayou Boeuf, ten miles from Brashear City. There they "went to bed on the ground in the open air." The next day got into camp, and "with our old tents up, feel as much at home as a soldier ever can."

While at this place, where they stopped for a day or two, Phelps writes, —

"Sabbath, April 5th. It is the Sabbath; but one would not know it here. The ground about our tents was uneven, and the men have been at work levelling it off. I did not help, and was almost glad that I was too unwell. To me it is the most trying part of my experience, I think, to lose the Sabbath as much as I do. Still I have

the Bible with its precious promises, and I do take comfort in them, I think. Having given Christ to die for us, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

"What a comfort, dear, that we can pray for each other, and hope for answers to our prayers! It takes two weeks for us to communicate with the other, but through the infinite One, we can, as we believe, in a moment call down blessings on the other. How much prayer and watchfulness are necessary to lead a right life! 'Without me, ye can do nothing.' But I have at times, since I have been in the army, had a greater sense of the love of God and the excellence of Christ than ever before. How good to be a true Christian. And how wonderful the grace that makes us poor sinners 'the sons of God.'

"Love to Christ, dear, is the life of religion. It is religion. 'Tis the highest motive to a right life. Relying upon good

habits, as the means of grace, we shall fail ; but upon the love of Christ, never.

"I want to see you ever so much, but will try to be patient and get all the joy I can out of the days as they pass. Let us seize hold of all that is pleasant around us, and look less at the dark side of life.

"It is good to feel that the infinite One is our friend, and will do all for us that is best."

At one time, when not feeling very well, he says, —

"We had a very good meeting in our tent last evening, which did me ever so much good. When I feel a little lonely, a good meeting will do as much as anything to cheer me up and make me rise above everything."

## CHAPTER X.

ALTHOUGH the 52d had before this time experienced comparatively little of actual warfare, they had their full share of sickness. And these recent marches were telling fearfully on the health of the men. The effect of the climate, too, as the warm season approached, was unfavorable, and the ranks were constantly thinning from disease and death. Mr. Phelps often alludes in his letters to the illness among them, and of the frequent deaths as "so sad to be sick and die far from home and loved ones."

He always speaks of his own occasion for gratitude that his health was continued, and ever expressed strong confidence that

he should be spared to return, though almost invariably he added the wish to leave all to the wisdom and love of his heavenly Father.

The tone of his letters was cheerful and hopeful, with very rare exceptions, and in his accounts of the discomforts and hardships to which they were exposed, he usually conveyed the impression that he suffered less than most of his comrades. At one time he writes, —

“I do not know what is before us, but I will not be otherwise than cheerful if I can help it. Feeling bad will not in the least help my case in any way, or bring the day of my return one moment sooner. All anxiety for fear something will prevent my reunion with loved ones will be of no avail. It will take place unless infinite Wisdom has some better way. Shall we not, then, trust in God that all will be ordered for the best?”

"I am not anxious ; for all our ways are in His hands. 'Why should this anxious load press down your weary mind?' Let it make us no more sad, but wait in patient hope for that which a Father's love and kindness shall bestow."

In April, in his letter to the Sabbath-school, after alluding to the death of a young soldier, a former member of the school, he says, —

"His name is another in the long list of martyrs to the cause of their country in this war ; for it is not only those whose names appear in a paper after a battle as 'killed' or 'wounded' who are to be called martyrs to the cause ; but we must count the tens of thousands who have died in hospitals, or have reached home only that the disease upon them might finish its work. Oh, what a vast number there have been ! and still the work goes on."

And after speaking of the weary marches and consequent sickness, he says, —

“ But all this and the horrors of the battle-field are cheerfully endured by thousands that the blessings of a good government may again be enjoyed over our whole land.

“ And is it not sweet, think you, for the soldier as he lies down at night, and looks up to the stars that shine above him, to feel that He who holds them there is a friend to him, and, as such, will protect him? It is a great thing to trust in God. And it is one thing to trust him, or to think we do, when we have all we want, and quite another thing when all looks so dark that we feel none but he can help us.”

Was he not “ learning lessons of heavenly wisdom ” from the discipline through which he was passing?

Truly, not in vain, either for his own



good; or for the highest welfare of others, was he called to tread this weary path.

We will now resume our gleanings from the record of the passing events connected with the movements of the 52d.

"Brashear City, April 11th. Thursday morning we were ordered off, and starting at ten o'clock, marched in the hot sun and dust ten miles to this place. Many thought it the hardest march we have had, and more fell out in our company than at any other time, I think. I got along well, and am now very well."

"New Iberia, April 16th. Late P. M. we were ordered off, and proceeded to transports, where we were crowded in some, we thought. We lay there till morning, waiting for the complete loading of the expedition, which consisted of some seven thousand troops, besides batteries, cavalry, etc. We moved off Sabbath morning into

a fine lake, where we moved on slowly all day and night.

"Monday noon got off the boat. We were sent up here above the rebels, while others were to attack below, and we would cut off their retreat. We met some rebels here, but it was before our regiment landed, and they were driven back. We moved some two miles and stopped for the night.

"In the morning we started early. There were three brigades of us, and we were the last to move. Soon after starting, we heard the sound of battle in advance of us, and were soon in sight of the fighting, though at a distance. The rebels were posted in woods as usual, and there was very sharp fighting for a while. Our regiment was not engaged at all, but expected to be. The rebels were driven back, for we had greatly superior numbers, but not till we had lost more than three hundred in killed and wounded. It took some time for us to

find out whether it was safe for us to advance, and by it the rebels made good their escape, which was all they wanted. They had been driven below, and by some 'blunder' we did not cut off their retreat. The day was spent in caring for the wounded. It was indeed a sad sight.

"The next morning we started in pursuit, many troops having come up from below, including Banks himself. For two days we have marched as much as we wanted to, having come nearly thirty miles. There has been little fighting since Tuesday, but many prisoners taken, and, on the whole, we are having good success.

"Saturday noon. Yesterday, we had a march of some seventeen miles, which was all we wanted. It makes at least forty-five miles in three days. We were marched yesterday till there were only ten men to a company, though perhaps some did not show as much pluck as they might.

"I do not yet know what are the results of the expedition, but feel that they ought to be something to pay for the labor. It seems as though we could not possibly have marched to-day!"

"Opelousas, Tuesday, 21st. On Saturday evening we had to move about a mile, and that night and the next morning we had a series of thunder-showers, which wet us some, and made it very muddy. But we had to go in the morning, starting about eleven o'clock and marching till sunset, though slowly, making ten or eleven miles. It did not seem much like the Sabbath, I assure you. Yesterday we came to this place, twelve more. We think it is pretty good marching to follow it up so, but rather tiresome."

"Barre's Landing, April 27th. We remained at Opelousas from Monday night till Sunday morning. Then of course we must move.

"We started early and came about seven miles, when a bridge broke, and we were obliged to wait some three hours to have it repaired. We then came on two miles farther, and have gone into camp at this place. The day was very warm; but we had our knapsacks carried, and did not get very tired.

"I suppose we have come here because there is cotton gathered here and shipped in large quantities. We have had plenty of sugar for a week; but other rations are rather short.

"Four of our company rejoined us from below yesterday. They bring the sad news of the death of two more of our regiment. This makes forty deaths in the regiment. How sad the tidings to those at home; to whom the death of their friends is generally the first intelligence of their sickness!"

"May 1st. This will be the evening for preparatory lecture, and I should love very

much to be there. It would be good to enter the old vestry once more."

"Sabbath, 3d. I am out on picket to-day ; so you see it is not much like being at church in N. ; but on the whole we have a quiet day. In camp there is service, the first in our regiment since March 8th. Had a good prayer-meeting last eve, in the open air, which was much enjoyed by those who love such things. I often think how good it would be to be at home, my own home, once more ; but it is not with feelings of sadness or regrets. The joys and comforts of home and social pleasures can be given up for a time if necessary. If we feel it to be our duty, let us do it cheerfully. Let us look on the bright side always while we humbly ask God to prepare us for all our trials, either present ones, or those which are to come."

"16th. I am not yet in love with military life. I have known Christian young

men get half through the day without knowing that it was the Sabbath. Such is life in the army."

Again he says, —

"War is sad, — sad in every view. If we shall be called into action, may God protect us and give us success. My health is very good, though we have had some exposures. If we can accomplish anything by what we go through, we are willing to do it. Truly, God has been good to me thus far!"

We copy a few passages from the letter written to the Sabbath-school in May, and they are his last words to them; for after that time there was little opportunity for writing.

"Another month finds us in the sunny South, and on the tented field. We are told that Abraham dwelt in a tent; but I cannot feel that he was much to be envied on that account. But it was his home; and

I have no doubt that he enjoyed his life as much as we, who live in fine houses.

"We have seen enough of the world to learn that a man is happy, not so much on account of what he has as what he is in his own heart."

After speaking, to the boys especially, of the two sides of a soldier's life, he concludes his letter :—

"But is there not a bright side and a dark side to almost everything in this world? The Bible speaks of the pleasures of sin. And oh, how many have been led by them in those paths which they found too late had thorns and briers, as well as roses. There are pleasures in this world upon which God smiles ; but they are not sinful pleasures.

"No man has ever lived who did not find much that was dark and trying which he could not understand. But God tells us of a world where all will be explained, and we



shall there see that wisdom and love together have always ruled the world. 'There shall be no night there.'

"At night, though the moon may shine brightly, we cannot see plainly, and how easily an object may be taken for something very different from what it is. But by and by, the day dawns, the stars fade away, the sun in its glory spreads light over the earth, and all is plain now.

"So, like the moon, we have the reflected light of God in the Bible; but how like the glorious sun will be the revelation of himself and his dealings in another world! May that revelation prove to none of us a terror, but life and peace!"

And he was himself the first of the members of the school to whom he penned these lines to enter that bright world "where all will be revealed." We doubt not it was to him indeed a revelation of "life and peace."

“ We know that life hath mysteries; for God hath not designed

To shed his great omniscience on the lowly finite mind;  
But when the soul is ransomed, and the fount of life unsealed,

The mind will grasp infinity, and all will be revealed.

Then let us place the anchor of our confidence and trust,  
On the might of the Creator, the Omnipotent and Just,  
Whose will we may not question, nor the hidden motive tell,

But rest in the assurance that he doeth all things well.”

## CHAPTER XI. •

It was now near the last of May, and the members of the 52d were looking eagerly forward to the time for their return home, which they believed to be very near. The expiration of the term was variously estimated. Not being officially decided upon, every man was left to form his own opinion. For some time the men fully expected to be at home as early as the middle of June, and their own patience, as also that of their friends, was pretty well tested. Among other trials, this uncertainty occasioned a suspension of letters from home friends, at least in a great measure, and this was a loss severely felt; and this, too,

during the most trying experience they endured.

The occupation of Port Hudson was the great object to be attained by the troops of which the 52d formed a part.

Mr. Phelps always designed to look on the bright side ; but as he says in a letter about this time, " War is very trying to the patience ; it takes so long to do anything."

About the 18th of May, the regiment, with others, again struck their tents and resumed marching. We have followed them on the weary way from Brashear City to Barre's Landing, and now another toilsome march must be performed. The weather was very warm, and the strength of many of the men had not recovered from the exhausting effect of previous over-exertion.

During this march, for the first time, our friend Phelps was obliged to "fall out" by the way, utterly unable to retain his place.

When he found it impossible to march, he tried riding on horseback, then on one of the wagons, but was finally compelled to give up and remain behind for the night. Of this march he gave very few particulars, merely saying "it was a terrible march;" but it was the general opinion of his associates that he never recovered from the effect of it, and though doing duty to the last, that his constitution was then undermined, and from that time he was gradually wasting away.

And yet he speaks of himself as very well, never giving his friends occasion to anticipate any fatal results, more than the solicitude which must be felt by friends for all thus exposed.

They marched to Brashear, from which place there was railroad communication with New Orleans. We now quote from a letter dated,—

"Near Port Hudson, June 9th. It seems

like a long time since I wrote you, and it is a longer time than usual. I wrote you from Brashear, May 27th, and told you that we should start for New Orleans the next day. We did so, at eight in the evening, riding on the top of freight-cars, and sleeping pretty well, or as well as you could expect. We reached Algiers, opposite New Orleans, at two o'clock, but remained on the cars till morning. We remained around the depot or in the streets till near night, when we went on board the 'Cahawba,' and in the evening started up the river, with two other regiments in the same boat. At about nine the next morning, we passed Baton Rouge, and at ten o'clock, I think, came to Springfield Landing, a place some six miles below Port Hudson. By noon, we were off the boat, took some dinner, and rested till about five in the afternoon, when we took up our line of march.

"We had to go around to the rear of Port Hudson, and on the northeast, making about twelve miles. It was nearly midnight when we lay down in the woods to rest, with the artillery playing near us at intervals, and the frequent discharge of small arms. We found the place surrounded by our forces. We are lying in thick woods, and with the exception of three or four days, have had nothing to do since we came.

"On Friday last we started with several other regiments for Clinton, some twenty miles to the east. It was reported there was a large force there ; but we did not find them, and on the fourth day, after sundry terribly hot and dusty marches, we got back here. By the blessing of God, I have been able to go through with it all, and now feel very well ; but we think we have had a hard time since leaving Barre's Land-

ing. It is nearly three weeks since we left there.

"While at Algiers we received a mail, the only one for more than a month, but are expecting one every day. When we go home, seems uncertain; but we shall expect to go soon after this place is taken. The hope of going home reconciles us to many things, and keeps up our spirits when weary and worn."

"June 12th. I am not sad, but hopeful, trusting in God. 'Tis the evening of prayer, never to be forgotten by us. 'Be of good cheer; for after a night always comes a morning, and certainly there will to us if we are the children of God.' What their plans are I do not know, but fear we shall have a Sunday battle. I do not think we ought; for I should have less hope that we should succeed."

"June 23d. I have delayed writing so long for several reasons, mainly because



it was so doubtful whether our letters were forwarded, and also the hope that we should soon be on the way home. But I know you are all anxious to hear, and I will write once more. And first of all I ought to speak of the goodness of God, that has spared me in health to the present time, while some of our regiment have been killed and wounded, and many are sick. We were not called to any service till the morning of the 19th, one week last Sabbath. Oh, why should that holy day be so often chosen for an attack? At a little past midnight we were up, and having taken a little something to eat, at about half-past two were started in the darkness. We had not much more than a mile to go, I think; but we got along very slowly, and at daybreak were moving up toward the rebel works. The noise of musketry and cannon, which is always continued somewhat through the night, became much more like the sound

of battle. At about sunrise, as we were going along a ravine, not thinking we were in much danger, a bullet struck one of our company but a few feet from me, killing him instantly."

"Our regiment were put out as skirmishers, in a field covered with logs and brush, so that it was very difficult to get along. Our company, with others, was held in reserve, behind the rest, but kept advancing for a while, and were exposed to bullets as well as the others. We had been here but a few minutes, when Captain B., supported by two of his men, came back, shot through the lungs. He lived till Monday night, suffering greatly. It was very sad to lose him; for he was a fine officer and a brave man. Our regiment lost six killed, and about ten wounded."

"Our company halted after advancing a little, and lay down, where with the exception of one day, we have been ever since.

It is in the open field, — that is, no trees, but some bushes, and a great many logs. We have fixed shades which partly protect us from the sun ; but the first day how we suffered with the heat ! Here we remain day and night, lying down most of the time because no other position is safe.

“ We are in sight of the breastworks, and near to them. The men on both sides indulge themselves in firing at each other when one shows himself. There are very few injured, however, the men taking care not to expose themselves much. We go out, one or two at a time, for water, running some risk, of course. But most of our time is spent in a horizontal position, reading our Testaments, and thinking. Have had some papers by mail. I said we were away one day. It was like this. Last Friday night we began to dig a rifle-pit for our protection, and having worked till eleven o'clock, orders came for our regi-

ment to go and guard a train of wagons next day. We went down at once a half-mile to where our cooking is done, and slept till morning—some four hours; went out then some thirteen miles with a train of wagons for corn. We rode some each way, but marched fifteen miles at least. The wagons were attacked by rebels, so they had to leave without loading, and we were sent out to skirmish with them. Our artillery drove them back, and no shots were fired at us I think. On our return they caused us some trouble, but no loss except a few wagons. Got back to where we stayed the night before at ten o'clock, very tired, and after supper lay down to sleep. At twelve we were routed up, and sent back to this, our old position.

"Such is our life. I hope and pray that we may live through all, and soon be at home. We hope the place will soon fall, and indeed believe it will. In the mean

time, we try to possess our souls in patience. It was a sad repulse on Sunday, and we lost one thousand, at least, in killed and wounded. Oh, what horrors hath war!

"A great many are sick as you may suppose. The weather is very hot, of course. I have written this resting on one elbow. We have our breakfast brought to us before sunrise, and our supper after sunset, for safety. So we have the full benefit of these long, long days.

"I have no hope of hearing from any of you again. May God in mercy bring us together, and to him we will give thanks. I hope for the best, and trust in the Lord for the future."

"June 28th. The light of another holy Sabbath dawns upon us. How sweet is the Sabbath to me! but it would be far more so, to be with loved ones in the house of God. 'My soul longeth for those courts'

as never before. I have longed so much to be at home. No one can tell when it will be, if ever, in this world ; but I am full of hope that such will ere long be the case. We need patience where we now are, and I pray God that we may have it. ' All things shall work together for good to them that love God.' May this be our experience ! ”

“ July 4th. Last eve was the time for preparatory lecture at the vestry, and how I longed to be there ! I did once so hope to be ; but it cannot be. All these trials shall, by God's blessing, be for our good ; for he knows how to sanctify his own.

“ The path of sorrow, and that path alone, leads to that land where sorrow is unknown. It is good for us, I hope, that we have been afflicted.”

“ It seems to me none of us will have much heart to celebrate this day. The

state of our poor suffering country is such as to call for prayer and fasting instead of mirth and festivity."

"July 6th. The last few weeks have been anxious ones to you, and to all the friends at home ; for you know that we are in danger. You can only trust in the Lord, that he will do what is best. For myself, I can say that I am still spared in good health, which is a great mercy ; for many are sick.

"I have been fit for duty since I have been here, now more than five weeks, when we expected to be here only a few days. Our company are having a better time than we had, as we do not stay in that place in the daytime, though we have some work to do instead. This forenoon we went into the intrenchments and worked till noon. It was terribly hot, and you may be sure that we did not work very hard ; for we could not. We hope the place will soon

fall, and without much more fighting ; but we cannot tell. In the mean time, we wait patiently, or try to. It seems as though none would be spared till the place is taken, though our time is out next Saturday. It now seems uncertain if our regiment gets home before August. I suppose we shall have no more letters, if we stay a long time, and we shall go home, if at all, not knowing whether our friends are dead or alive."

But while he was so eagerly looking forward to a return to his beloved earthly home, others felt that he was passing to another.



## CHAPTER XII.

ON the 7th of July the welcome news was heralded among our brave troops at Port Hudson :—

“Vicksburg surrendered on the fourth.” Glorious news of itself, and doubly joyful to them, because it would insure the speedy surrender of Port Hudson.

But one day more and the victory was complete ; the proud “Father of Waters” was no longer closed, or held in subjection by the rebel forces. From its source to its mouth, it was no longer barricaded by a hostile foe, and the brave 52d might realize the long-cherished, long-deferred hope of a homeward passage up the Mississippi.

And still the time of departure was de-

layed ; the regiment were many of them at Baton Rouge, and those who were able must be brought up to join the others. Then there was a delay ; for transports had not yet arrived.

Wearily and painfully the days passed by ; for now their work was done, they had laid down their arms, and nothing was left for them, but waiting and hoping.

In the mean time, disease was busy, and death was fast lessening their numbers. The worn, exhausted frames had no power left to combat the destroyer ; and when assailed by fever, they fell before it, even as a frail flower is withered by the fierce storm-blast.

We can give but one more passage from the pen of our faithful Christian private ; but it speaks of patient trust. He says, —

“ Oh, how much sadness is connected with this one regiment ! What cause for gratitude we have that I am still spared ! When

I see so many dying while I still live, I feel rebuked for my impatience to get home. 'Be of good courage, and wait on the Lord.' 'Weeping may endure for a night; but joy cometh in the morning.'"

Day by day, the strength of our friend was failing, and his wasted form becoming more thin and worn.

He would not give up, and did not seem to realize how completely exhausted he was. He felt that if he could only start for home, he should revive at once. When urged to go into the hospital, he refused, fearing that he might then be left behind when his comrades went home.

There were some, at least, among his companions who felt that he could never endure the journey, if it was undertaken; but he never complained, and had a cheerful, hopeful word for those who felt dispirited and sad. And many would go to

him for comfort and encouragement when their own hearts were heavy.

On the morning of the 22d of July, he arose and prepared his breakfast as usual, and kept about most of the day. About four o'clock in the afternoon he was attacked with congestive chills, and from the first seemed almost wholly unconscious. He lived until half-past one of the morning of the 23d, less than ten hours after his attack, when he ceased to breathe. ●

But a few hours before, he had been watching most longingly to catch some glimpse, or hear some tidings, of the government transports which would convey him onward toward his much-loved home, where loving hearts and open arms were waiting to give him a glad welcome.

All this time his kind heavenly Father had other joys awaiting him, and sent an "angel guard," to bear his spirit on wings

of holy love to the bright mansion that his Saviour had made ready for him. And there a purer, more loving, more joyful greeting would welcome his entrance to those holy courts than even a devoted wife, tender mother, affectionate brother and sisters, or friends could give ; for there would be no alloy. His work on earth was done, and well done, and he has gone to his blest reward ; has entered into the joy of his Lord, "to go no more out forever." No more weariness, — no more yearning of soul for home and loved ones, — no more longing for the courts of the Lord's house and the sweet communion of the people of God. He is satisfied. No more sin, — no want or wish ungratified.

A band of true-hearted mourners stood around the grave of one they all respected, and whom many loved even as a brother ; for all felt that a good man had fallen. At eleven o'clock the same morning that he

died, they laid his form to rest in the silent grave, with appropriate and impressive services. The chaplain said most truly of him, "He had not an enemy in the regiment, nor, as I believe, in the world. His consistent Christian life has been a great help to me since I came out with you, and I doubt not that others, yea, all that knew him, will say the same." He also urged them all to remember "that it was his Christian faith that gave him such a beautiful character."

The colonel of the regiment also expressed his high appreciation of the character of the deceased, and bore ample testimony to his untiring fidelity in the discharge of every duty as a soldier, never shrinking from performing even more than his full share of labor.

"Fearless wage life's sternest conflict,  
Faithful be to thy high trust,  
If thou'lt leave a memory cherished,  
And a path bright as the just."

Just as these mourning soldiers turned from the grave of Spencer Phelps, the transport touched at the levee, which was to bear the 52d homeward.

It was not with feelings all of joy that they hailed its approach ; for with many, thoughts of the brave brothers whom they should see no more cast a gloom over their departure.

And some must bear the heavy burden of sad, crushing tidings to friends at home ; must tell them of the light that has gone out, no more to brighten and cheer their hearts, but leaving them so dark and desolate that nothing save the light of God's presence can illumine the darkness.

But we will not follow these tidings, as they are borne by electric power to these expectant hearts, reaching them just as they were every hour, nay, every moment, watching for the train which would bring

home the 52d, and restore the loved absent ones to friends and home.

The friends of Spencer Phelps now cherished scarce a foreboding of possible danger; for the day, the hour, had arrived when they might expect to fold him in their arms once more.

But a few brief words are borne with lightning speed over the wires, and these joyous hopes are engulfed in the dark, bitter waves of terrible grief. From lip to lip, from heart to heart, the sad message passes, until the very streets seem shrouded in gloom. The "shout of thanksgiving" which the church were ready to raise when "that brother should return, to whose words of counsel they never listened without feeling refreshed," was suddenly changed to one of mourning and lamentation, and they uttered the earnest cry of the Psalmist, "Help, Lord, for the godly man



ceaseth, and the faithful fail from among the children of men."

We will not follow these heavy tidings to the deeply stricken home-circle, but let us, rather draw around their too sacred grief the veil of silent, earnest sympathy, commending them to the tender love, the sweet consolations, and precious sympathy of the "Man of sorrows," the infinite, un-failing Comforter. Hear him say, "My grace is sufficient for thee." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

May their blessed experience enable them, even from the depth of their sorrow, to adopt as their own the expression of those beautiful lines which their "lovely one departed" used so sweetly to sing!

"With tearful eyes I look around ;  
Life seems a dark and stormy sea ;  
Yet midst the gloom I hear a sound,  
A heavenly whisper: 'Come to me.'

- “ It tells me of a place of rest;  
It tells me where my soul may flee,  
Oh, to the weary, faint, oppressed,  
How sweet the bidding ‘ Come to me ’ !
- “ When nature shudders, loath to part  
With all I love, enjoy, and see,  
And a faint chill steals o’er my heart,  
A sweet voice utters, ‘ Come to me.’
- “ Come, for all else must fail and die ;  
Earth is no resting-place for thee;  
Heavenward direct thy weeping eye ;  
I am thy portion ; ‘ Come to me.’
- “ Oh, voice of mercy, voice of love,  
In conflict, grief, and agony,  
Support me, cheer me from above,  
And gently whisper, ‘ Come to me.’ ”

## CHAPTER XIII.

WE will close this brief memorial by citing some passages of letters, written either to the family friends of Mr. Phelps, or for the local press, by those who were intimately acquainted with his general and Christian character.

The following extract was written by a member of the 52d, just before leaving Port Hudson, for home, July 23d, —

“Having just returned from the funeral of your brother, Spencer Phelps, I feel inclined to write a few lines concerning him. I truly feel that in his death I, too, have lost a brother, and that I am a mourner. You can imagine, and yet I think you cannot fully realize, how dear the little band of

Christian brethren in this regiment, who have so often met for social prayer, had become to each other. Spencer was one who took great delight in these meetings, always willing to do his share in sustaining them. And when for a series of weeks we have been unable to enjoy them, he would be the first to come over to me, when we did have a resting-place, and propose that we have a meeting.

"I have spent many, very many pleasant hours with him in his tent, always finding him cheerful and happy, ready to do his duty, both as a Christian and a soldier. His health has uniformly been good, and he has been everywhere that the regiment has been, with perhaps a single exception. I had noticed for some weeks past that he was growing very thin, and looked worn out. Especially had this been the case since we came up to the siege of Port Hudson. That terrible march from Barre's

Landing to Brashear City was more than his constitution could bear. Since he has been here, till the place surrendered, every day, during those long, dreadful twenty-three days that the 52d were in rifle-pits, found him in his place, though he was so exhausted that sometimes at night he would go back a little way into the woods, and seek a little rest. I saw him nearly every day after we came inside the fortifications. He was always cheerful; would say that he thought he felt a little better; but I could see that he grew thinner, and walked more feebly. He longed to start for home. I knew nothing of his sudden illness till nearly sunset yesterday. I went immediately to his tent; but he was too far gone to know me, or even his own brother-in-law."

"Thus we have left all that was mortal of this dear brother; but I need hardly urge you to look up and see this dear

friend in the Saviour's presence, far, far away from the sad scenes of earth, forever happy with Him whom his soul loved."

The following extract is from the pen of one who was an almost constant companion of Mr. Phelps from the time of their first encampment, much of the time occupying the same tent :—

"On the very morning of our departure, our own company was called upon to lay away the remains of one who, as a Christian soldier, a faithful performer of duty, and a patient endurer of the trials to which he was subjected, was unsurpassed by any in the regiment, and who had won the respect and love of all who knew him. His health was undermined by the severe march from Barre's Landing to Brashear, near the last of May ; but he persisted in remaining at the post of duty. He was a participant in the expedition to Clinton, on which more than fifty men were prostrated by sun-

stroke in a single day, although in charge of General Paine, an officer noted for his care of his men, and kind to them. He was engaged with us on the memorable 14th of June, and remained with the company in the trenches to the day that we took possession of the place. He also took part in the expedition to Jackson, on the 20th of June.

"The work done, he was obliged to yield to the power which was ever tightening its grasp, and from that time, I think, was under medical care, although at no time in the hospital. We knew he was quite ill; but no one realized how nearly the cord of life was severed. It seemed to us almost impossible that a man whose future promised so much usefulness could be called away in the morning of life. We knew what he had been to us; we knew what his influence had been over us all; we knew that *he* was prepared, whether for life or

death; but who could fill his place in the church, in the Sabbath-school, in the community? Ah! who in the household circle? But his work was done, and he was to go home to his reward.

"Late on the afternoon of Wednesday, the 22d, he sunk into insensibility, and a few hours afterward, without a struggle, the spirit passed away from earth. So died Spencer Phelps, beloved and respected by all who knew him. No man ever enlisted in the army from a higher sense of duty than he. Few, if any, sacrificed more than he in leaving his home. Among us, the sorrow at his loss was deep, genuine, and universal. The hour that we laid away his dust under the shade of the dark-leaved magnolias of the South will be one long remembered by us all."

From these passages we see how he was esteemed by his fellow-soldiers, and now turn to the testimony of an absent member



of the Edwards Church. Words of private personal sympathy seem to us almost out of place on the printed page, designed for the public eye, and we only quote such portions as relate to the character and cherished memory of the departed.

"I feel, in unison with all our church, deep grief at the loss of your and our dear brother. Our church had not within it a man I more truly respected, and whose Christian character I more thoroughly admired, than Mr. Phelps. He has fallen a true martyr to his sense of duty, — a martyr to the cause of human rights and liberty, — a martyr to our beloved country, in whose defence he gave up all he held most dear. Surely, he shall wear the martyr's crown in that blest land where all who have served God shall worship and serve him for evermore. May we, too, be found worthy to stand beside him there! May his mantle of humility, of unselfishness, of

love to Christ and to the souls of men, fall on us who remain here below a little longer ! God knows just the best time to call his children up higher, — just the right time to unveil before them the joy and glory of his heavenly abode. We cannot mourn for him. It would have been sweet for him to look on the dear home scenes and home faces once again, as he so much longed to do ; but it was far sweeter to look on the home above. And for that vision his soul longed, doubtless, even more earnestly than for the earthly home which was so precious to him.”

Our next reference is a letter from the pastor of the Edwards Church, then absent in Europe. Rev. Mr. Hall had been acquainted with Mr. Phelps from the beginning of his Christian life, becoming pastor of the church soon after his conversion. After speaking of the loss to the family friends, Mr. H. says, —

"The Edwards Church has lost an excellent member; and the Sabbath-school and the pastor, — we all are mourners together. It is not often that my feelings actually force tears; but I have to confess that I cannot keep my eyes dry as I think and write of him who had so greatly endeared himself to me. Solomon says, 'A faithful man who can find?' as if such were very rare. But Spencer Phelps deserved to be called a faithful man; always in his place, — always ready for service, — always doing thoroughly whatever he undertook, — always the same, — modest, amiable, devout.

"And as he faithfully served his Saviour, so he served his country. His record is on high, and he has doubtless heard the glad words, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.' But his memory is with us. His name will be cherished by his relations and his Christian brethren. Tell — to exhort the young men of our church to follow

more closely his quiet, consistent, earnest example. It is no affectation to say that I loved him heartily, — more, indeed, than I was myself conscious of till now, as I reflect that I shall see his face no more in the flesh.”

Allusion has several times been made to the early employer of Spencer Phelps, K. A. Burnell; and we give some extracts from a published letter of his, written some few weeks after the death of this “beloved disciple.”

“The day on which the 52d passed Memphis, I shall not soon forget. The gladness of meeting so many from N., and the 52d, in which I had taken so deep an interest, was like this life; for in it all came most bitter trial, deep sorrow. When I asked concerning Spencer Phelps, and received the reply, ‘*We buried him the morning before we left Port Hudson,*’ my heart said, ‘A nobler son, brother, husband, or Chris-

tian soldier the old Bay State has not to lose.' None but his wife knows better how to mourn his loss than I. No, I cannot except his own family friends. He became a member of my family in the spring of 1850, and for the five following years was son, brother, counsellor, and friend. My only daughter speaks of him with all the fondness of an elder brother, and my now sainted wife was in an agony of soul for him when the Holy Spirit was doing its office work in his heart. May we not feel that they are striking glad hands on the plains of deliverance, and now, forever companionable, cast their crowns at the Saviour's feet? What a loss to the Edwards Church! Indeed, my alma mater in spiritual things, have any gone from you, in losing whom the eternal city gains as much, and among the young, could you experience a greater trial? His erect form took its seat at your melodeon; his fingers

made music ; his voice sung praises ; his words led your devotions, and his admirable business qualities were always an example of Christian faithfulness. I always felt the power of his steady life, and of his admirable uniform qualities. Two years ago about these days, I gave him the farewell hand in your streets. We had been enjoying a delightful meeting in the Edwards Church vestry. I shall never forget his deep sympathy as evinced in his countenance, and conveyed by the warm and loving hand-grasp. As I review my entire mechanical companionship and acquaintance in your favored town, I think of no one whose memory stimulates me more, whose uprightness and constant integrity make me stand more firm, and whose Christian principle and steady living and loving are more powerful in example. I expect to be in New Orleans late in autumn, and shall not fail to stop, if at all possible,

and drop heartfelt tears over the soldier's grave of as noble a husband and brother as the noblest State in the Union had to lose. Indeed, you don't know how in Christ I loved him, and how my already stricken and bleeding heart mourns his early departure.

"To his sorrowing wife, his aged and widowed mother, his bereaved and only brother, and the three smitten sisters, I, in common with all who knew him, offer heartfelt sympathy."

THE END.













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